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Memorial of the Convocation of the Colored People in the Diocese of North Carolina Presented to the Diocesan Convention of 1916

To the Rt. Rev. Father in God, the Bishop of the Diocese of North Carolina, and Brethren of the Convention in the 100th Annual Session.

FATHER AND BRETHREN IN CHRIST:—Your Colored brethren send greeting in the Lord.

The Convocation of the Colored People would most respectfully invite the attention of this Convention to a consideration of the subject and action thereon again of the "Racial Episcopate." The General Convention of the Church will meet, God willing, in the city of St. Louis next October. In 1913, when the Convention met in New York City, after a failure to get concurrent action of the House of Deputies in what the House of Bishops decided by a majority vote was best for the advancement of the work among colored people, the matter was placed in the hands of a Joint Commission to report at the next sitting of the Convention. The Commission has on its board men who are both for and against the missionary jurisdiction plan, and up to this present time it is not generally known whether or no they will report favorably as viewed from the standpoint of your colored brethren. We desire, therefore, to address you on this subject, and point out to you the real situation as looked at from our side, and at the same time give such information as will show to you the reasonableness of our contention.

After a half century of freedom the American Negro has proved himself in the land of his adoption a necessary asset in almost every walk of life. In the wonderful development of the Southland during the past two or three decades, Negro labor has been a necessity. He has learned to work, and that fact has aided much in quickening his aspirations, thereby causing him to live alongside of his white neighbor, accumulating property, educating his children, assimilating to a large extent those elements characteristic of the better class of your people; and at the same time remaining just as separate and distinct in things purely social as one's fingers on his hands. But, unhappily for the colored people, the Church's work among them has been very meager. The little part, however exercised by this Church towards evangelization of Afro-Americans has meant much in directing them rightly. There are about 10,000,000 of colored people, and the little efforts so far made are not at all comparable to the opportunities within reach of this Church. Out of this large number of colored people not more than 25,000 are directly influenced by the Church's teaching. A little more than 50 per cent of the entire Negro population are not directly influ-

enced by any organized Christian body. A large majority of Clergy and laity feel that the crying need is a change of our present system, thereby giving us a larger part and share in the work that means for our good and uplift. Our contention is not uncatholic, as we conceive the practice of the Church in its early days. To quote a recent writer in the *Living Church:* "This plan has been faulted as being contrary to Catholic polity, making jurisdiction concurrent yet independent instead of territorial. Admitting the fact that in the West at any rate this is an unusual thing and that the ordinary normal method of extending the Episcopate is in the diocesan system, we must not forget that other methods have been used and have not been condemned by the Church as uncatholic. In this case we have a very close analogy in the condition in many places in Apostolic times, where large Jewish and Gentile Christian populations were living side by side. In that case there was not even color to aid in distinguishing one from the other, but any attempt to mix the two led to disaster. There were two races living in the same territory, largely speaking the same language, subject to the same civil authorities, yet absolutely separate in social and religious customs. The Apostolic Church met the issue by committing the Gospel of the Circumcision to St. Peter, and the mission to the Gentile to St. Paul. There was no worry over the fact that they were working in the same place at the same time." But this point needs no argument, as it is generally understood that the Church may make such provision as will give to colored Churchmen a *status.*

(a) It is therefore proposed: "That the House of Bishops may establish Missionary Districts upon racial lines, *i. e.*, for a specified race or races, within the bounds of Dioceses and Missionary Districts, authorized in section 1, severally or in such groupings as it may determine: *Provided*, that in case of a Diocese such racial jurisdiction within the Diocesan borders shall first be ceded by the Bishop and Convention of the Diocese.

"(b) In the interpretation of the Constitution and Canons, the people and churches of such Racial Missionary Districts shall occupy the same relation to the General Convention and have the same rights of representation therein as other Domestic Missionary Districts.

"(c) No such cession by a Diocese or division of a Missionary District shall carry with it the members of the ceded race who may be or become members of congregations not included in such cession or division.

"(d) The House of Bishops may from time to time change, increase, or diminish the territory into which such Racial Missionary District extends, in such manner as may be prescribed by canon.

"(e) Such racial jurisdiction within the bounds of a Diocese may be retroceded by the House of Bishops, if the Bishop and Convention of such Diocese shall consent to receive it."

This plan gives to the Negroes the opportunity of true leadership by the best of their own race, and at the same time will remove all bitterness and apparent social friction. The Church at the same time will be making it possible for a much larger influx of the colored people within her fold. They remain away now largely

because of the often repeated utterance: "The Episcopal Church is the white man's Church, and there is no chance for us ever reaching the place of leadership among our people; hence, we will remain for the most part in our own churches, governed and directed by our own leaders." But for us who love the Church and would rather die than leave the object of our first love and devotion, we pity our own flesh and blood, and are contending for their sake and for the sake of generations to come that the Church make it possible for us to reach more largely the rank and file of our people.

In our former memorial we laid especial stress on comparisons between the several departments proposing a Missionary District for the Negroes and the relative numerical strength of these departments in communicants and Clergy.

Since that memorial was presented there has been a readjustment of these departments by the Church into new divisions or provinces. The former Fourth Department is now the Province of Sewanee. Having 7,160 colored communicants, it lacks only 293 of being equal in membership with the Province of Washington, while its 115 congregations surpass by 45 the number of congregations in the former, and the number of the Clergy, 66, more than double the Clergy, 30, in the Province of Washington.

Thus it is seen that the greatest strength of the Church among the colored people lies within the Province of Sewanee, and the greatest number of our people live within this area, thus making it an ideal territory for the establishment of a Missionary District.

Now, the number of colored communicants throughout the Church of congregations exclusively colored is reported as 25,759; Clergy, 142. This is 6,661 members more than the last official Government census reports, the number therein given being 19,098.

According to the census, the Protestant Episcopal Church shows an increase in every way over the last census. But can we rest satisfied with such a small membership as compared with the denominations? And are we not moved even to greater depths of concern when we compare this small number to the great mass of Negroes who are untouched by the Church?

There were 3,685,097 Negro communicants distributed throughout the various denominations. Note what a small proportion this great Church of ours has gathered into its fold. The Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, who have Negro organizations attached, outnumber us in their colored communicants, the Methodists having much the largest number, 308,551, the Baptists 32,639, and the Presbyterians 27,799. And what has surprised us not a little, the Roman Catholic Church has been steadily though quietly gaining a foothold among our people until now they have a membership of 38,235, more than double our number.

Perhaps the most notable circumstance in the statistics of the religious bodies among the Negroes is that the greatest number of communicants belong to those bodies which are exclusively Negro, the total number of such members being 3,207,307. More than 2,000,000 of these are Baptists; 852,315 of them are Methodists, the A. M. E. Church having 494,777; the A. M. E. Z. Church 184,542, and the C. M. E. Church 172,996. These bodies, too, are increasing more

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rapidly than those that are attached organizations, holding 85.4 per cent of the entire Negro organizations, 87 per cent of all members being enrolled among them; they have 83.2 per cent of all the Sunday School scholars; and hold 67 per cent of all the parsonages and 78.9 per cent of the total value of church property.

This excellent progress is due largely to the opportunities of growth and development in leadership, initiative, and self-dependence.

We sincerely believe that like opportunities opening to our people through the Missionary District plan, with a Bishop or with Bishops of our own race, with representation and voice in the General Convention, will cause a healthy growth in membership such as we have not hitherto experienced.

We would not wish to lose contact entirely with the Christian brotherhood of the Church. Therefore we ask that this plan be adopted, so that though we may be separate members we may at the same time be inseparable from the main body; while separate branches we may all be united in the True Vine.

(1) We most earnestly and respectfully, then, desire that this Convention reaffirm its position for Racial Missionary Bishops, taken at the Convention of 1913, and urge the Commission on the Racial Episcopate to report their findings to the General Convention next October in favor of the adoption of our proposed legislation;

(2) That the following memorial and petition be sent to the Commission on the Racial Episcopate from this Convention, to wit: That it may please the Commission to recommend and urge upon the General Convention, to assemble in St. Louis *in October of this present year*, that legislation be enacted (*as already proposed*) by that body to provide that the Negroes resident within the area of the *Province of Sewanee, or part thereof*, with their lands and properties, may be constituted in a Missionary District of this Church, and a Missionary Bishop of the Negro race may be elected to be the Missionary Bishop thereof;

(3) And in particular do we request that this Convention will pursue the same course through its Secretary as was done with such telling effect in 1913, viz., that the Secretary of the Diocese be instructed to forward copies of the memorial to each of the deputies to the next General Convention from the various Dioceses and Missionary Districts composing the Province of Sewanee, with the request that they join us in the objects of the memorial.

Finally, your colored brethren will continue faithful in the future to the trust committed to their keeping, as they have endeavored to do in the past; ever confident that He who has begun a good work in *us* "will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

HENRY B. DELANY,
JAS. KING SATTERWHITE,
ROBERT N. PERRY,
CHAS. H. BOYER,
GEO. C. POLLARD,
J. O. PLUMMER, M.D.,
Committee.